



Recent Amtrak Incidents Spark Worry



AMTRAK TRAIN CARS DANGLE OFF OF A BRIDGE AFTER A DERAILMENT OUTSIDE SEATTLE IN DECEMBER 2017. IMAGE SOURCE: CNN

rate of Amtrak accidents per million train miles traveled increased from 41.1 to 58.8 between 2008 and November 2017. 119 died in Amtrak related accidents in 2008, and 167 died January through November 2017. Specifically, the rate for Amtrak related accidents that were not at a road crossing decreased from 2.4 to 1.4 between 2008 and November 2017, suggesting that accidents at railroad crossings have increased.

A recent spike in deadly railway accidents involving Amtrak passenger trains have prompted worries from travelers and safety officials. Within the past three years, there have been five fatal Amtrak accidents, of which two are from the past month.

Studies performed by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) has shown that the

According to the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), the number of fatalities involving railway vehicles (not limited to Amtrak) in Illinois has decreased overall between 2007 through 2016. The highest during that time period was in 2010 when 18 fatalities were recorded. The lowest was in 2013 with three fatalities.

Source: USA Today. [Available online at <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/02/06/amtrak-crash-concerns/307948002/>]; Fatality Analysis Reporting System.

OFF THE PRESS...

Some bizarre traffic incidents that made the news in February:

- Man with gunshot wound approaches officer performing a traffic stop: www.whas11.com/article/news/police-man-shot-on-illinois-ave-gets-help-at-traffic-stop/417-521389031
- Fire truck accident ends with truck driver being ticketed despite having emergency lights on: foxillinois.com/news/local/fire-truck-driver-issued-citation-after-vermilion-county-crash
- Four semis collide on Interstate 94 in early February; one catches fire: www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/lake-county-news-sun/news/ct-Ins-gurnee-tollway-semi-crash-fire-st-0207-20180206-story.html

Two School Districts Fail Bus Inspections



Two Crystal Lake school districts 47 and 155 failed their school bus safety inspections. A total of 19 buses did not pass the inspection, and 8 of those violated school bus safety laws. These violations included a leaking fuel tank, three exhaust leaks, and one unsecured fire exit. Two special

education buses also violated state code with misused lift doors. IDOT ordered the buses to be put out of service until appropriate repairs are made.

In addition to the 19 failed buses, a Traffic Joint Agreement (TJA) staff member in association with the two school districts allegedly hid 10 of the districts' school buses before the inspection. District 47 officials admitted an "error in judgement" by the TJA staff member, but the Illinois Department of Transportation is investigating the incident. The 10 hidden buses passed the inspection.

Source: Northwest Herald. [Available at <http://www.nwherald.com/2018/02/05/19-crystal-lake-school-districts-47-155-buses-fail-idot-safety-inspections/am77ve2/>]

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National Safety Council's Traffic Accident Estimates

Defensive Driving Tips

In response to the increasing trend of traffic fatalities, the National Safety Council urges drivers to proactively enforce safe driving practices:

- Practice defensive driving—learn more about defensive driving at <http://www.nsc.org/learn/Safety-Training/Pages/defensive-driving-driver-safety-training.aspx>.
- Make sure to always use a seat belt.
- Designate a driver when travel plans include alcoholic beverages.
- Avoid driving fatigued, and drive attentively, avoiding distractions.
- Understand any side effects from prescription drugs that may impair your ability to drive.
- If you have a child who just started driving, engage with their driving habits and teach them defensive driving.
- Stay up-to-date with the safety features equipped on your vehicle—learn more at MyCarDoesWhat.org.
- Visit ChecktoProtect.org to make sure that your vehicle has not been recalled; if it is under recall, have it repaired immediately.

Source: The Auto Channel [Available online at <https://www.theautochannel.com/news/2018/02/15/509459-preliminary-estimates-motor-vehicle-deaths-plateaued-2017-but-still-up.html>]

The National Safety Council (NSC) has released their estimates of 2017 roadway traffic fatalities across the United States. Although this past year's count of 40,100 fatalities is 227 fewer than 2016's 40,327 fatalities, the NSC reports that 2017 is the second year in a row in which fatalities surpassed 40,000. The last time fatalities exceeded 40,000 before 2016 was in 2007.

Over a ten-year trend, after the market collapse in 2008, traffic fatalities decreased with the lowest year of fatalities in 2011. There has been a steady increase in fatalities since 2014. The NSC claims a relationship between number of fatalities and the state of the U.S. economy, noting that as the economy improves, more people can afford to plan discretionary travel.



NATIONAL SAFETY COUNCIL CEO DEBORAH HERSMAN DISCUSSES THE POSSIBLE WAYS A CHANGING ECONOMY CAN AFFECT TRAFFIC FATALITY OCCURRENCE. IMAGE SOURCE: WIKIMEDIA

NSC CEO Deborah Hersman acknowledges that the general increase in fatalities since 2014 occur in the midst of traffic safety improvements and vehicle engineering breakthroughs, including

increased seat belt use, automated driving, and improved emergency braking technologies. Increased speed limits and increased distracted driving may play a role in the increased fatalities, Hersman states. Indeed, Hersman's claims may hold some truth, as traffic fatalities rose in Texas, where maximum speed limits increased from 80 to 85 miles per hour; on the other hand, fatalities dropped in New York, where speed limits in New York City were lowered.

While fatalities decreased by 227 between 2016 and 2017, traffic injuries and damage/injury costs also decreased by about 1 percent. With an increased number of miles driven between 2016 and 2017, the fatality rate per million motor vehicle miles traveled decreased by 2 percent.

Source: VOA News. [Available online at <https://www.voanews.com/a/us-traffic-deaths-decline/4255585.html>]; CNBC. [Available online at <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/02/14/traffic-deaths-edge-lower-but-2017-stats-paint-worrisome-picture.html>]

A High in Fatal Crashes on Cannabis Day

A new study has concluded that a significant increase in fatal traffic accidents occur on April 20, a popular counterculture holiday that celebrates the collective consumption of cannabis. During this "High Holiday", pro-cannabis activists and other cannabis enthusiasts organize a synchronized smoke on 4:20pm local time across American metropolitan areas.

However, it is known that tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) can decrease reaction times and could lead to higher risk of traffic accidents. In fact, the study by Staples and Redelmeier (2018) calculated a statistically significant increase in fatal traffic accident risk for April 20 compared to adjacent days April 18 and April 22. This increase is especially discernible for drivers younger than 30. Staples and Redelmeier (2018) also compared this jump in fatal crashes to the sharp increase in traffic accidents that occur

during the Super Bowl weekend.

While the relative peak in fatal crashes on April 20 can easily be associated with the cannabis celebrations, a detailed objective analysis is difficult given the resolution of the Fatality Analysis

Reporting System (FARS) database that Staples and Redelmeier (2018) employed. As a result, it is still unclear how many of the fatal accidents on April 20 specifically involved drivers under the influence of THC.



CANNABIS ENTHUSIASTS AND ACTIVISTS GATHER FOR AN ANNUAL "420" CELEBRATION. IMAGE SOURCE: SENSI SEEDS

Source: Staples, J. A. and D. A. Redelmeier, 2018. "The April 20 Cannabis Celebration and Fatal Traffic Crashes in the United States". Published online February 12, 2018. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2017.8298.

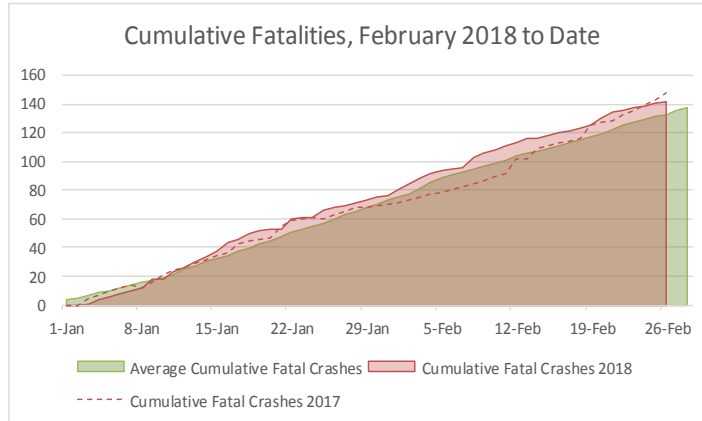


Early 2018 Stats Show More Fatalities

Early statistics of 2018 traffic fatalities show that this year's cumulative traffic fatalities are greater than not only last year's, but also the mean cumulative traffic fatalities.

The first week of January 2018 seemed to show a lower number of cumulative fatalities compared to both the mean and last year's cumulative fatalities, possibly tied to the colder than average temperatures that dominated the Midwest before and after the New Year. Temperatures in Lincoln, IL, did not exceed 20°F between Christmas Day 2017 and January 6, 2018. However, the cumulative fatalities quickly surpassed last year's aggregates by the 8th and surpassed mean fatalities soon afterward.

Mean cumulative traffic fatalities are calculated from 2006-2015



CUMULATIVE TRAFFIC FATALITIES, THROUGH FEBRUARY 2018, COMPARED TO 2017 AND TO 2006-2015 CUMULATIVE FATALITY MEANS. DATA SOURCE: ILLINOIS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

IDOT traffic accident data, by taking the mean daily fatality for each given day for ten years. The end of the year cumulative statistics total an average of 1,014 fatalities per year, which rounds to between 2 to 3 traffic deaths per day.

Although this data is provisional and subject to change as more information is collected, it is worth noting the consistent surplus in fatalities. A regional analysis may provide clues as to where in particular the increase is prevalent.

Source: Fatality Analysis Reporting System; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Year-To-Date Traffic Fatality Statistics

February 26, 2018

132 Fatal Accidents*
142 Fatalities*

On this day last year:
133 Fatal Accidents
148 Fatalities

6 Under
Change from last year

*Provisional, subject to change

Will County Oversize Truck Permit Fees to Increase

Road Safety and Business



Will County's Public Works Committee has approved an increase in the fee for oversized truck permits in the county from \$20 to \$50. Officials noted that the revenue accrued from this increase would be used to repair roads worn down by trucks, to newly designate and update truck routes within Will County, and to implement an online permit purchasing procedure through the county. This marks the first increase in fees in 16 years.

Will County expects the new fee plan to begin on February 15 and the online pay-

ment option to open on March 5. The county processes an average of 10,000 to 15,000 permit applications per year, according to data from the past ten years.

Source: Chicago Tribune. [Available online at <http://www.ttnews.com/articles/illinois-county-make-truckers-pay-more>.]

Last Month's Weather Digest

January, 2018
Springfield, IL

Average High: 36.5°F
1.7°F warmer than normal

Average Low: 16.1°F
2.6°F cooler than normal

Total Precipitation: 0.53 in.
1.29 in. drier than normal

Total Snow: 1.6 in.
4.8 in. less than normal

Source: National Weather Service
Lincoln, IL





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Super Bowl Police Enforcement



The Illinois State Police (ISP) and several municipal and county police departments concentrated on stronger traffic safety enforcement over the Super Bowl weekend. The Super Bowl is a time for family bonding and celebration, but it can also be a time for increased drunk driving and other irresponsible driving

behaviors. Several ISP districts and local police departments across Illinois increased DUI enforcement to encourage safer driving and reduce traffic accidents.

Results from this year's Super Bowl enforcement include over 70 citations from the Lake County Sheriff's Office, 28 citations from the Crystal Lake Police Department, and 16 citations from the Hinsdale Police Department. These citations included DUI arrests as well as seat belt citations, speeding citations, driving without insurance or license, and possession of cannabis or open alcohol in vehicle.

Last year's Super Bowl enforcement tallied a total of 1,744 citations for Illinois, including 195 alcohol-related arrests.

Source: The Dispatch. [Available at http://qconline.com/news/local/illinois-state-police-to-conduct-occu...forcement-patrols/article_535d5743-4979-580d-a9b8-4a10834a68be.html.]

ISP Promotes Safety at Chicago Auto Show

What do tollway employees working along the expressways and state police troopers performing traffic stops on the shoulder of interstates have in common? They both are at high risk of being struck by oncoming traffic because they are so close to the road. To prevent such tragedies from occurring, the Illinois State Police (ISP) is collaborating with the Illinois Tollway Authority on a campaign called "Give Them Distance" to urge drivers to move over and give distance to stalled vehicles and workers.

ISP attended the Chicago Auto Show not to showcase new features of the state police vehicles, but to promote safety and raise awareness of the "Move Over Law" through their Give Them Distance campaign. ISP invites all drivers to take the pledge to move over for flashing lights, maintenance workers, or emergency situations. You can visit givethemdistance.com to learn more and to sign the pledge. ISP says their goal is to collect one million pledges.

Source: NBC Chicago. [Available at <https://www.nbcchicago.com/news/local/chicago-auto-show-give-them-the-distance-473392743.html>.]

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